

Desperate Measures

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Summary: Simba and Nala wake up one morning in a completely different pride. What does the mysterious King Hapana want from them?

Chapter 1: Chapter 1: A Serious Case of Sleep

AN: On with the series. I'm back with another story, and this time there's no Kulaani illness to stop Simba from running around the place, like the happy cub he is. It'll make the stories a lot more exciting now, won't it? Not that they weren't exciting already, of course, heh heh.

Desperate Measures

Chapter One: A Serious Case of Sleep

"It's gone," Simba said, hopping from left to right. "Yep. Definitely gone." A grin spread across his face. "No more illness!" He bounced around, happy that the pain was finally over. "I haven't felt this happy ever since... before I had the illness!"

Simba was particularly happy today, because for the first time in a long while, he'd woken up without feeling any pain. None at all. The Kulaani illness – which had plagued Simba's body for the past few weeks – had finally gone away. He knew it was going to take a while, but it was finally gone. And he hoped this time that it was for ever. He'd suffered enough pain. It was time he had some fun.

"Yeah," Nala said flatly, letting out a big yawn. "Great, Simba." She buried her head in her paws and closed her eyes.

Simba shot her a funny look. "Hey, hey, what?" he said, looking around the den. "Nala, the sun is shining. It's time to get up and go! Come on! We've got adventures to have!"

"Maybe some other time," Nala muttered, rolling onto her back. "I'm tired. All I want to do now..." She yawned again. "Is sleep."

"But... But it's the middle of the morning!" Simba argued. "I thought I was the one who was supposed to be tired in the mornings!"

Nala opened one eye. "Morning?" she exclaimed, slowly getting to her paws. "Simba, have you looked outside at all?"

"Uh... yeah," he replied, looking out of the den. "Like I said – the sun is shining. Now let's go! We're wasting valuable adventure time!"

"Simba, the sun is *setting*," Nala informed him. "Not rising. I've been sleeping for more than half a day and I *still* feel tired." She let out a big yawn. "I just need to go to sleep... for a really long time. Wake me up in a year or two," she said as she closed her eyes.

"Setting? What?" Simba exclaimed, running out of the den to see whether Nala was joking or not.

Indeed, the sun was beginning to set, slowly turning the day to night. *You've gotta be kidding me*, Simba thought, his eyes widening, before running back into the den. "And why didn't you tell me this before?" he asked Nala.

"I was busy," came the reply from her.

"Doing what?" Simba asked.

"Sleeping," she replied. "Ever since yesterday I just want to sleep. Sleep, sleep, sleep..." Nala slowly drifted off to sleep, her mouth hanging open.

Simba rolled his eyes and nudged her again. "Come on, Nala! You can't sleep for ever!"

"No. But I can try," was her reply.

"How could I have fallen asleep for a whole day?" Simba asked, scratching his head in confusion. "I never sleep through the morning! This is just... weird. Since when do I wake up in the evening? I would have got up earlier, but I was asleep!"

"Just forget about it, Simba," Nala said, shifting slightly to make herself comfortable. "There's no use trying to stay up when you're tired. Just copy me and you'll be fine by tomorrow."

"I don't think so!" Simba declared. "To make up for missing the whole day, I'm going to stay up the whole night!"

"We tried that once before," Nala reminded him. "It didn't work so good. I mean, sure, you overcame your fear of the dark, but you also ended up having to save us all from vampires."

"Well, maybe I *like* saving you all!" Simba retorted.

Nala's eyes snapped open, and she looked at Simba, surprised. "You serious? Simba... are you trying to tell me that you *enjoy* almost getting yourself killed every single day?"

"Uh... kinda," Simba replied awkwardly, chuckling. "You get used to it after a while, you know? It's just that... when we're out there saving the day... you get that feeling."

"What feeling?" Nala asked, cocking her head to the side, forgetting about all her tiredness for the moment. Simba always managed to catch her attention somehow. He just always seemed to... have something interesting to say.

"That feeling you get when you're *winning*," Simba explained. "When... you're hanging off the edge of the cliff with some psycho clinging on to your legs. And then he loses his grip and falls to his death! That kind of feeling. It's a rush."

"Creepy," said Nala, staring at him. "Sounds like you're getting a little *too* obsessed with your heroic adventures, Simba. I think it's about time you had a good night's sleep."

"You know, you're starting to sound like my father."

"Good. At least one of us – wait a minute, I don't want to sound like that. I want to go to sleep!"

"A whole day!" Simba moaned, sitting on the floor, a glum look on his face. "I don't believe it! Just think of all the hours I could have spent—"

"Getting yourself killed?" Nala finished for Simba, resulting in an eager grin from him.

"That's right!" he exclaimed, nodding. "Come on – forget all about sleeping so we can go fight some guy with claws as long as a tree branch!"

Nala was fast asleep on the ground, motionless. Simba's face fell. "Great," he said flatly. "I shouldn't have even woke up at all!" He slumped to the ground. "Why is life so unfair?"

"Is there some kind of problem, Simba?" Sarabi asked, walking into the den to see what her son was complaining about. "You seem very... troubled today."

"You don't know the half of it, Mom," Simba replied. "I've been asleep for a whole day! I wouldn't fall asleep for a whole day unless I was old! Or Uncle Scar! If he was still alive."

"Then you shouldn't stay up so late," Sarabi advised. "A cub like you needs a lot of energy to get through the day."

"But I *didn't* stay up late last night!" Simba protested. "You and Dad weren't even home by the time I went to sleep!"

"You're more tired than I thought," said Sarabi. "Maybe you should try not to run around so much in the day? It'll certainly stop you from getting into trouble all the time."

"Hey, I'm not the one who gets into trouble," Simba argued. "I'm the one who *stops* trouble. Don't you remember all the amazing things I've done? Come on, I'm your favourite son! You *must* remember!"

"You're my *only* son, Simba," Sarabi reminded him. "If I had more sons then you wouldn't be the future King."

Simba's eyes widened in surprise. "Wait, what do you mean?"

"Simba, you have to admit that you're not very... responsible," Sarabi explained. "You should try to be a bit more mature," she said, before turning around and walking out of the den, leaving a shocked Simba.

He quickly turned to Nala, nudging her. "Nala, am I responsible?"

"Not at all," she replied, half-asleep.

***Chapter 2*: Chapter 2: Claws That Can Kill**

Chapter Two: Claws That Can Kill

Tojo couldn't explain it. In that moment, he realised that she completed his life. Completed his life in a way he couldn't even comprehend. She meant the world to him, and he was sure that deep down, in that dark heart of hers, she felt the same. That is, when she wasn't trying to make millions of people scream in terror.

One day she'd tell him she felt the same. He was pretty sure of it. One day she'd throw her paws around him, lean in close and kiss his—

"Tojo!" Tama shouted, slapping him hard on the face.

"Ow!" Tojo cried, putting a paw to his burning cheek. "What did you do that for, Tama?"

"You went off to that place again," Tama told him. "That mystical place that I can't get to no matter what I do."

"What, my mind?" said Tojo.

"That's right, yes," Tama replied, nodding. "I don't like it when you daydream. It's not healthy for my partner."

"Best friend," Tojo corrected her, causing her to frown and give him an angry glare.

"Don't ever call me your best friend again, Tojo," Tama snapped. "Those two words should never go together, in my opinion. They represent..."

"A strong bond between two people?" Tojo suggested with a little smile.

"No. *Happiness*. And I *despise* happiness. You know I've never ever been happy, Tojo," said Tama.

"Come on, Tama! You smile a lot these days," Tojo told her. "I've seen you!"

"And how would you know something like that, Tojo?" Tama asked, gritting her teeth. She was never supposed to be happy. The horrible things that had happened to her made her incapable of feeling happiness. She was always going to be an evil person. No one could change that.

"When you're not looking, Tama," he replied, smiling. "When you're sitting on the ground, thinking to yourself, I see a little smile on your face. Face it – you *can* feel happiness."

"Okay, so I feel happy on rare occasions," she said, turning away from him, frowning. "It's just... an occasional thing."

"You've done it eight times in the past two days," Tojo informed her, causing her eyes to widen in surprise.

"Just how often do you spy on me like this, Tojo?" she asked, suddenly causing him to look nervous.

"W-why would you think I-I'm spying on you, T-Tama?" Tojo said with a nervous chuckle, backing away a little. "I just... notice sometimes, that's all."

"You notice a *lot*, by the looks of things," said Tama, looking him up and down. "I'll let you know right now, my clever cub, that I don't approve of you spying on me at all. I bet this is all some kind of sneaky plan so you can turn me over to King Mufasa for my crimes against the pride."

Tojo sighed and rolled his eyes. "Why would I turn you over to King Mufasa, Tama? You're my only – forgive me for saying this – friend. I've..." He sighed sadly, looking down at the ground. "Got no one else to talk to."

Tama couldn't help but smile, walking over to him and putting a paw around his shoulder, holding him close to her. "Hey, kid, you're the only person I've got, too. I guess you can say we're pretty close. Not that I want to pick out dens or anything."

Tojo nuzzled the side of Tama's face, catching her by surprise. "Thanks a lot, Tama. Even if you don't like to admit it, you'll always be my best friend." He smiled. "I think you feel the same way, too."

Tama sighed. "Yeah..." she admitted quietly, so Tojo couldn't hear. She slowly pushed herself away from him. "But hey, enough of this fluffy stuff, we've got things to do. Plans to make. People's lives to wreck."

"I sense another evil scheme," said Tojo, rolling his eyes. "What's it this time? Steal the world's supply of air?"

"Oh, there's an idea... No. We need to eat, Tojo, and to eat, we need food," Tama explained, pacing back and forth, a plan forming in her head. "So we're going to steal our food. Gotta eat to live, gotta steal to eat."

"Where are we going to steal food from, Tama?" Tojo asked. "It's all hunted around here. You can't just *take* it. You need to *hunt* it."

"But I'm no hunter!" Tama argued, holding up one of her paws and extending her claws. "Do these claws look fully developed to you?"

Tojo's eyes widened at the sight of her sharp claws, which glinted in the sunlight. "Uh... Tama, you do realise that with those claws you could take someone's head off with one slash?"

Tama raised an eyebrow. "Really?" she exclaimed, surprised. "I thought they were kind of... pathetic. I thought they could do with a good sharpening."

"You think they need to be *sharper*?" Tojo squeaked. "Fully grown lionesses don't have claws that perfect!"

"What fully grown lionesses have you talked to?" Tama retorted. "Or is there something from your royalty days that you're not telling me, Tojo?"

Tama was referring to the fact that Tojo had recently discovered that he was going to be the future king of his old pride. A pride that his own father had burned to the ground. The stress of running the pride had become too much, and he slaughtered them all.

Tojo was the only survivor, and it was just recently that he had remembered his heritage. He was a prince. He didn't think of himself as one, but he couldn't ignore the truth. Even Tama knew that.

"Royalty days?" said Tojo. "Come on, Tama, I wasn't a prince for *that* long. I'd hardly begun to live."

"It doesn't matter how long," said Tama. "You were still a prince. Technically you're a king now, but whatever. I guess that means I'll have to viciously murder you in your sleep so I can take over your pride," Tama teased, a little smile on her face.

"Tama!"

"I'm kidding."

AN: Tojo and Tama continue to form a bond. When will this endeavour come to a close? It's not like that's three stories away or anything. I've said too much again, haven't I? Oh, well. I'll take a step back from the speeches so you can have your say in a review. It only takes a minute. Don't make me give you my puppy dog eyes...

***Chapter 3*: Chapter 3: Settling the Score**

AN: You like shocks, don't you? Well, um, here's another one!

Chapter Three: Settling the Score

"Irresponsible!" Simba exclaimed, pacing back and forth around the den, a shocked look on his face. "Me? The most responsible cub in the world – *not* responsible? I've never heard something so silly! I'm more responsible than... than a responsible person! Yeah! Isn't that right, Nala?"

"Sleepy, sleepy, sleepy..." Nala muttered, still asleep.

"That's what I thought," said Simba. "Somehow, I need to prove to my parents that I can be the most responsible cub around! I mean, as if saving the pride from certain doom wasn't enough? What *will* please them? Come on, think, Simba, think! What's the best thing that anyone can do to make their parents proud?"

Simba tried and tried to think of something, but couldn't come up with a single idea. "This is hopeless!" he declared, collapsing onto his back and staring up at the ceiling. "I'm forever going to be known as Simba, the most irresponsible cub who ever lived. I might as well go to sleep and never ever wake up again." He shot Nala a look. "Like you, Nala. I bet you're pretty happy in dreamland right now, aren't you?" A grin then formed on his face. "Hey! There's an idea! I'll just go to sleep, and tomorrow I'll wake up with plenty of ideas to get Mom and Dad to realise that I'm responsible! That'll show 'em!"

Simba closed his eyes and relaxed. It wasn't long before he slowly drifted off into a deep sleep.

Unfortunately for him, it wasn't going to be a very peaceful one.

"Did you miss me, Simba?" Hago asked, smiling sinisterly down at the cub he hated so much. The cub that had wrecked all of the plans he had for his life. The cub that murdered him, sending him to a punishment of neverending darkness.

Simba looked around, suddenly feeling very vulnerable. He expected to see the flames that were a usual element of his nightmares that involved Hago. But this time, it was strangely different. They were in some sort of white void that seemed to stretch out for ever. It was just him and Hago – which only managed to make it scarier. "Where are we?"

"Some sort of void," Hago replied, looking around. "A place full of... nothingness. Not as much nothingness as the darkness you sent me into, though."

Simba stared hard at him. "You deserved it," he stated. "It was your fault that you died. No one else's."

Hago laughed, throwing his head back. "Oh, you still don't seem to get it, do you, Simba? After all the heroic deeds you've done, you've still failed to realise who your greatest enemy of all is..." Hago's eyes glinted with maliciousness. "You."

Simba's eyes widened in surprise. "What?" he exclaimed, unable to believe what Hago was saying. "What do you even mean by—"

"It's not too hard to understand, Simba," Hago interjected. "It just takes a pinch of rational thought, that's all. Think about this – out of all the mischief you and that wretched girlfriend of yours have gotten into, who's caused the trouble in the first place? You. It's your fault that your uncle tried to take over the Pride Lands. It's your fault that you've almost gotten yourselves killed hundreds of times over. It's your fault that you're just not a very good person."

"You... Y-you're lying!" Simba stammered, not wanting to hear any of this. Hago was trying to mess with his mind again. He couldn't let it get to him. He couldn't allow himself to get suckered in by these blatant lies.

Hago sighed, putting a paw to his face. "We don't seem to be getting anywhere, do we? You see, Simba, out of all the monsters you've faced, you are the biggest of them all. You're just too selfish to realise that. Which makes you a very irresponsible person, I might add."

"I'm not irresponsible!" Simba argued, unable to stop himself from listening to Hago. He always managed to get to him, one way or another. "I've done a lot more good things than you've done in your whole life!"

"None of that matters, Simba," Hago told him. "You only do these good things to make yourself popular with those who

know you. You don't do it for good reasons. Just for your own selfish reasons. You never do anything remarkable out of the goodness of your heart. It's all just so people will think better of you."

"Why... Why are you telling me this?" Simba asked, tears welling up in his eyes. It was happening again. The inner torture of his soul. Hago just managed to make Simba feel like he was a horrible person. Like he wasn't worthy of anything or anyone.

"I'm telling you this, Simba, because soon I'm going to put your 'goodness' to the test," Hago revealed. "Why do you think we're here? It's taken me such a long time to crawl out of the darkness to get to this point, Simba. Such a long time. But soon it will all be worth it."

"Why?" Simba asked, staring into his eyes.

"Because I'm coming back, Simba. Coming back to settle our score," Hago revealed, before laughing evilly at the top of his voice.

"No!" Simba cried, as he felt himself beginning to fall through the whiteness of the void.

He kept falling. Down, down, deeper and down, as Hago's maniacal laughter echoed through the void...

Simba woke with a start, sitting up, breathing heavily. "No! No!" he shouted. "You can't come back! You can't come back..." Looking around the den, he slowly got to his paws, padding over to Nala, who was still sleeping. "Nala," he called, prodding her. "Nala, come on. Wake up. I need to talk to you."

"Sleepy, sleepy, sleepy..." Nala's eyes slowly flickered open. She shook her head frantically, her senses returning to her. "Simba?" she said, sounding dazed. "What happened?"

"What do you mean?" said Simba, confused. "Nothing happened. I'm just waking you up, that's all."

"Huh?" said Nala, surprised, getting to her paws. "Well, how long have I been asleep for?"

Simba turned his head towards the den opening, staring at the morning sunlight that was shining through. "I'd say more than a day," he answered, causing Nala's eyes to widen in response.

"More than a day?" she exclaimed. "That's just ridiculous! I *never* sleep for more than a day! What's happening to me?"

"Nothing's happening to you, Nala," Simba assured her. "You just said you've been feeling really tired, that's all. Remember?"

Nala stared into his eyes, and shook her head. "No. I *don't* remember, Simba. Just what the heck is going on?"

"Weird..." Simba said, looking around the den, before noticing something quite surprising. "Nala..." he gasped, his eyes widening in shock. "I think it's about to get worse."

"How worse?" Nala asked, a worried look on her face.

"More worse than being stuck in the desert with no food or water. For a year," Simba responded. "Because I've just noticed something really, *really* bad."

"What is it, Simba?"

"This isn't our den."

Chapter 4: Chapter 4: We Must Feed

Chapter Four: We Must Feed

Nala's eyes widened. "Oh, no..." she moaned. "This isn't our den? Then whose den *is* it?" she asked, looking around. "We're probably part of some kidnapping plot!"

"So where are we?" Simba wondered, walking towards the opening of this new den, wanting to know where they had ended up. He just hoped it wasn't far, because he wasn't exactly the best at finding his way home. If they were any further than the jungle then they were doomed. "It's really dark in here! And creepy."

Simba was just about to walk out of the den when a lioness stepped in front of him, blocking his path. "Whoa!" he exclaimed, stumbling backwards. "Uh... Hello! I was just saying, uh, nice den!"

Two more lionesses joined her on either side, glaring at Simba, like they were zombies. "We must feed," they said in unison.

Simba's eyes narrowed, as Nala joined him by his side, her eyes wide with fear. "You're gonna what?" he said, confused.

"We must feed," they said again, before stepping towards the two cubs slowly.

"Yeah, I think they mean us," Nala said, backing away from the advancing lionesses, with Simba doing the same.

"We must feed," they continued, as more lionesses marched into the den, all of them walking slowly towards Simba and Nala. "We must feed. We must feed. We must feed."

The two cubs were backed up against the den wall, and they soon realised that there was no escape for them. These lionesses had them cornered, wanting to consume the both of them. Was this how it was going to end for them? Eaten alive by a bunch of crazy, hungry lionesses?

"We must feed. We must feed. We must feed." The same three words were repeated over and over again by the lionesses, as they got closer and closer to the two of them.

Nala extended her claws in defence, ready for a fight. She knew that it wasn't exactly a fight she could win, but she wasn't going to go down without a fight. She'd be brave to the very end, and it looked like the end was very close indeed...

Simba couldn't look away from the advancing lionesses. *Is this what Hago was talking about?* Simba asked himself, his mind thinking back to that nightmare. *Is this that 'test'?*

"We must feed. We must feed. We must feed. We must feed. We must feed. We must feed..." The lionesses were almost right up in their faces. Simba closed his eyes as tight as he could, knowing that he was going to experience a most painful end...

"Okay, okay, so this is what we're gonna do," said Tama, as she and Tojo made their way out of the Outlands – which they had been living in for the past few days – on their way to the Pride Lands. "Once we arrive in the Pride Lands, we're going to look for an antelope or a juicy wildebeest."

"Yeah, and what do we do then?" Tojo asked, getting the feeling that they were way in over their heads here. Tama may have the sharpest claws this side of the Outlands, but did that really mean she had the skill and agility of a hunter? He had to admit, he was sceptical about the whole thing...

"Once we find our kill, all we have to do is hunt it down and kill it. Then we can eat like kings, if you'll excuse the pun," she explained, sounding eager to go on her first hunt. "I've never done this kind of thing before! I have to admit it's really exciting! I can't wait to dig my claws into that antelope's stomach and tear open its insides, releasing its slimy entrails onto the ground!"

"You make your point quite vividly, Tama," said Tojo, his eyes widening slightly. "But hey, if you're the one who's going to be doing the actual *hunting*, then what am I going to be doing?" he asked. "Do you want me to be your lookout or something?"

Tama smiled and shook her head. "No, no, no, Tojo. You're the most important part of my plan!"

"Really?" said Tojo, grinning. "I'm the most important part of your plan?"

"That's right," she replied, nodding. "You're necessary for the whole thing to work. I wouldn't be able to do it without you."

"Wow!" Tojo exclaimed happily. "Gee, Tama, what do you want me to do?"

"I need you to be a distraction," Tama explained. "You're going to be the damsel in distress!"

"Oh, cool..." Tojo said, nodding, before his mind properly registered what Tama had said. "Wait, *what?*"

"We must feed..." the lead lioness said, before smiling at Simba and Nala. "You. If you're hungry."

Simba narrowed his eyes, confused. "Sorry, what?"

"Sorry," the lioness said. "It's just a little joke we pull on all our new visitors. Sorry if we scared you."

"Oh," Simba said, letting out a deep breath, relieved that these lionesses weren't going to rip him and Nala to shreds.

"That's okay. But, um... where are we?"

"You're in the Hope Lands," the lioness explained. "We're sort of like the... brother pride to your one. After all, the King of the Hope Lands is your father's cousin. Once removed, that is."

"All right, girls, I think I can take it from here," said a male voice that echoed through the den. "Step aside so I can meet the new arrivals."

The lionesses all stepped to the side, bowing their heads in respect, as a skinny adult lion approached Simba and Nala. He had golden-brown fur, and a thick brown mane, with green eyes. "Simba! How lovely it is to see you after all this time!" he exclaimed, grinning. "Boy, I haven't seen you since you were..." His grin faded away. "As tall as you are now." He scratched the back of his neck. "Huh. Time doesn't go so fast after all. Anyway, I'm King Hapana. Your father's cousin once removed, and King of the Hope Lands!" he exclaimed. "And this must be Nala!"

He grinned again, shaking Nala by the paw. "Nala, I've heard absolutely nothing about you, but I'm sure I'll learn something by the time the sun sets."

"Well, um... it's really great to meet you," Simba told him. "But... if you don't mind me asking... why have you brought us here?"

"Ah," said King Hapana, smiling. "The answer to that is very interesting indeed."

AN: That Hago thing didn't sound too good... King Hapana's a certainly interesting character, though, isn't he? I wonder what he wants with our two favourite cubs? Only time will tell...

Chapter 5: Chapter 5: The Ultimate Relative

AN: Time to learn more about King Hapana. What a crazy character I've created!

Chapter Five: The Ultimate Relative

"What's so interesting about it?" Nala asked King Hapana, intrigued herself as to why they had been brought here by him – at least, she *assumed* it had been under his order. Who else would have done it?

"You see, since I'm quite a distant relative of yours I rarely ever have the chance to visit," King Hapana explained. "In fact, I've only ever seen you once and that was just after you were born."

"Wait a sec," said Nala, narrowing her eyes in suspicion. "If you've only seen Simba once – just after he was born – then how do you know about me? I didn't know Simba until—"

"So anyway," King Hapana interrupted, ignoring her. "I decided that I should be like the loving relative I am, and bring you here so you could visit me at my wonderful kingdom. You can call me Uncle Happy, if you want!"

"I think we'll pass on that," Simba muttered. "But did you really have to drag us here in our sleep? Why couldn't you just ask us?"

"Um..." King Hapana looked nervous for a second. "It was a surprise!" he exclaimed to the two cubs. "And it certainly looked like you were surprised, too! My lovely lionesses are very good at jokes. This must be the fifth time the 'feeding' gag has worked. It's just a shame the other four lions never decided to stick around. I think we scared them a little too much..."

"So, um, what exactly do you want us to... do?" Simba asked, cocking his head to the side.

"You don't have to do anything," King Hapana replied. "I just want to treat the two of you, and be the ultimate relative! You can do whatever you want, eat whatever you want, and... I think that's about it, actually. So..." He grinned widely at the two. "What do you think?"

Simba and Nala exchanged happy glances at each other. "Cool!" they both exclaimed, grinning back at him.

King Hapana smiled. "I think I'm making a good impression already."

"Damsel in distress!" Tojo cried, as he and Tama stopped walking in the middle of a grassy field. "I can't believe this! And it's supposed to be the *most important* part of the plan? You just want to embarrass me!"

"I need someone to distract the wildebeest or antelope or whatever the heck it is I want to kill," Tama explained. "Come on, Tojo. It's not going to be *too* embarrassing."

"Oh, so it'll just be a *little* bit embarrassing!" Tojo exclaimed, his eyes widening. "Well, that makes me feel a whole lot better, Tama! I won't humiliate myself too much after all! Just a *tiny* bit!"

"Look, kid, do you want to eat like a king – which you technically *are* – or do you want to starve, dying a slow and painful death?" Tama asked, knowing what his answer was going to be.

"I think I'll take the 'eating like a king' option," he replied.

"Good." Tama smiled, before turning around and looking around the field. "Now all you need to do is..." She picked up a clump of dead grass and put it on top of Tojo's head. "Wear this. It makes you look a lot more feminine."

"*What?*" Tojo squeaked, looking upwards at the dead grass that now covered his head. "You can't seriously expect me to *wear* this!"

"Like I said, Tojo – damsel in distress," she said with a smile. "You're going to make a lot of juicy antelopes go wild, all right."

"Let me get this straight – I have to entice an antelope or wildebeest into chasing me around the place, while you try to hunt it down?" said Tojo, a frown on his face. "This is beginning to worry me, Tama. What if I get killed in the process?"

"Aw, you won't die, Tojo," she assured him. "I'm not gonna let that happen. Not unless I *want* you to die. But be warned, if

you don't do this then I *will* want you to die!"

"You're a real pal," he said flatly, as his frown only managed to widen. "You can't expect me to humiliate myself just so we can eat. I deserve a little something extra, especially since I've given up my life of luxury in the Pride Lands to live with you in the dirty Outlands! Can't I have a little something in return?"

"I'll kiss you."

"Right, let's do this," Tojo said quickly, running away from Tama across the field. "Come on, Tama!" he called over his shoulder.

Tama smiled. "The way to get a boy to do anything," she said to herself as she watched Tojo run. "Be romantic."

Having been walking around for more than an hour, Simba and Nala found themselves amazed by how beautiful the Hope Lands were. They didn't expect the kingdom to be as picturesque as the Pride Lands, but they were pleasantly surprised.

"It's pretty neat, huh?" said King Hapana, as he stopped at the edge of a winding river that seemed to go on for miles. "Especially this river. It's got such a strong current that it'll take you right to the edge of the jungle if you jump in. It's the longest slide in the world!"

"How far away are we from the Pride Lands?" Simba asked, wondering how long it would take for him and Nala to get back home again. He figured it was quite a long way, because the jungle that was close to the Pride Lands was nowhere in sight...

"Oh, a few miles or so," King Hapana replied, sounding unconcerned by such matters. "But that's not important right now. Why worry about home when you can have fun all the time here? Hey, there's an idea... this can be your home away from home!"

"Right..." Nala said, looking away from him. "You're not very close to Simba's family, then?"

"Me?" King Hapana laughed. "Not really. Mufasa and I weren't exactly what you would call close. Which isn't surprising considering I live several miles away. We did occasionally have family reunions, but by then Mufasa had a girlfriend, and expressed no interest in playing with me. He just wanted to hug and cuddle and kiss with her! It wasn't very fair, in my opinion." King Hapana frowned.

"So how did you end up seeing me just after you were born?" Simba asked wonderingly.

"Well... it wasn't exactly a *planned* thing. I just showed up out of the blue," King Hapana explained. "I heard that my brother's son was about to be showcased for all the world to see, and I knew I just *had* to witness it. But the only thing I could think when I got there was that I hoped that monkey wouldn't drop you from the edge of Pride Rock. That would have been some nasty business, then, wouldn't it? It's lucky your parents got you back just before he made off with you!"

"Uh, I don't think you quite understand—" Simba began, before King Hapana cut him off again.

"What's next, then?" he asked, looking up at the bright blue sky. "Oh! It's lunchtime! Time for some dinner, I think. Care to join me? We've got the finest antelope this side of the world."

"Wow. Really?" said Nala.

"Yep. All you can eat!" he exclaimed.

"Come to think of it, I am feeling hungry..." said Simba, rubbing his growling stomach with a paw. Maybe some lunch wouldn't be such a bad idea right now...

Chapter 6: Chapter 6: King Hapana's Night Ritual

Chapter Six: King Hapana's Night Ritual

"Simba!" Nala cried, running over to him, her eyes wide with shock. "What are you *doing*?"

Simba was lying on his back with a mouthful of wildebeest meat stuffed into his mouth, a wide smile on his face. His stomach had doubled its normal size, and it was bulging with all the food he had eaten. "Nala, you've *got* to try some of this stuff! Here, take some!"

Nala pulled a disgusted face. "No, Simba! Eww..." She stared at his huge stomach, and she became even more shocked. "How did you manage to eat so much? It's only been an hour!"

"It's so good," he replied. "I've never seen so much food in one place before! I just want to eat, and eat, and *eat*! I never want to leave..."

"You're gonna make yourself sick with all that food you're eaten," she warned him. "Or at least you're going to get a stomach ache."

"It's worth it..." Simba muttered, swallowing the wildebeest meat he had in his mouth. "Just to eat so much food." He closed his eyes. "Ah..." he sighed. "I'm in Heaven," he proclaimed, a goofy smile on his face.

Nala prodded his bulging stomach. "How much stuff is in there? I couldn't eat this much food in my whole *life*, never mind an hour!" She frowned. "That's it! Come on! Get up! You need to get some exercise!"

She tried to lift Simba up, but he was just too heavy. "Aw, forget about that stuff, Nala. Let's just try to relax. No worries."

"Oh, please don't say 'no worries'," Nala moaned, rolling her eyes. "I keep having nightmares about that meerkat and the warthog. Do you know what it feels like to have your soul drained?"

"No, but I know what it feels like to taste the greatest food in the world," Simba replied, rolling onto his fat stomach. "I *love* this place! Why didn't Dad tell me he had a cousin before? I would have come here all the time! It's ten times better than the Pride Lands!"

"I think you'll find that your Dad *did* mention that he had a cousin before," Nala reminded him. "Don't you remember? He and your Mom left for the day to come here, so they left Zazu in charge of things."

Simba thought for a moment, and then suddenly remembered. "Oh, yeah. He did mention King Hapana before. He was in some kind of... trouble. That's what my Dad said."

"Hmm..." Nala suddenly looked very suspicious. "I wonder what *kind* of trouble he was in? It might have been something really serious..."

"Aw, you're just getting all suspicious, Nala," said Simba. "The guy's just trying to interact more with his distant relatives, that's all. He just wants to treat us like the rightful kings and queens that we are."

"I don't know," said Nala, looking left and right. "I think it's kind of... weird that he just suddenly decided to *take* us. I bet your parents are going out of their minds right now worrying about you. And what about *my* mother?" She gasped. "She's already lost her mate! She must be worried sick that she's lost me, too!"

"Then you should have had a brother," Simba jokingly suggested. "Although he probably would have ended up getting in the way all the time, spoiling all our fun. It's fun being an only child. In fact, I'm actually *lucky* to be an only child. If I had a brother or sister then I wouldn't be the future King of the Pride Lands."

"Huh? Why not?" asked Nala, confused.

"Well, this morning my Mom told me that I'm not... responsible," Simba explained, a sheepish look on his face. "Why would she say that, though? I'm the most responsible person you could ever hope to meet!"

"That's debatable," Nala teased, a little smile on her face. "After all, you do like to get us into trouble a lot of the time."

Simba frowned. "Oh, thanks a lot, Nala! First Mom, then Hago, and now you—"

"Hago? How can *Hago* tell you that you're irresponsible? He's dead!" she interrupted.

"Yeah, I meant in a nightmare, Nala," Simba explained. "It was really weird, actually."

"Why? What did he say?"

"Well—"

"Simba! Nala!" King Hapana called, walking over to them. "Putting a bit of weight on, Simba?" he commented, noticing Simba's big stomach. "I'm on a diet, myself. Gotta keep thin, you see. Anyway, are you two enjoying yourselves here in the Hope Lands?"

"Uh, yeah," Simba replied, smiling. "It's really great! Especially the food! You got any more?" he asked hopefully, resulting in a chuckle from King Hapana.

"There's plenty more food to go around, Simba, but you'll have to wait until the special ritual tonight," he told the cub, causing Nala to give him a curious look.

"Ritual?" she said, her eyes widening slightly. "What do you mean by that?"

"Oh, it's just a little gathering we have for all our new visitors. A chance for us to get to know each other properly. It'll be a lot of fun, and there'll be lots and lots of food!"

"Yes..." Simba said, his eyes widening. "*Food*..."

Tama and Tojo's head popped up over the top of the large rock, and they sneakily observed a wildebeest that was grazing quietly in a field. "There it is..." Tama whispered, smiling. "The first victim that will experience the wrath of my hunting powers."

"The wrath of your hunting powers?" Tojo said with a snicker. "There's no way you can make that sound threatening in any way. And speaking of powers, can't you just use your magic to kill the wildebeest?"

"You know I can't control my powers, Tojo," she explained. "So we're going to have to do this the good ol' fashioned way." She bared her teeth and extended her claws. "With scary teeth and sharp claws. You wouldn't want to meet me in a dark cave."

"Can't argue with that," he agreed. "After all, you do look very scary. Even when you *don't* have your teeth and claws showing."

"Hey! You're getting too big for your paws, Tojo!" she said. "Don't get smart with me! Or you won't get your... reward for helping me with this hunting."

"Oh, yeah," Tojo said, as he felt himself beginning to blush. "The kiss. I almost forgot about that for a second."

"Uh-huh," said Tama, nodding. "If you want that kiss, Tojo, then you're gonna have to work for it." She giggled alluringly. "You... *do* want it, don't you?"

Tojo stared into her eyes, as if he were in some kind of trance, and slowly nodded. "Yeah... I do..."

"Good. Now go stand in front of the wildebeest, speak in a really girly voice, and make it start chasing you," Tama ordered.

"Yeah..." Tojo suddenly snapped out of his trance. "*Speak in a girly voice?*" he squealed. "You've gotta be kidding, Tama! You said this plan only involved me being a *little* bit embarrassed!"

Tama shrugged. "Plans change, Tojo. Now you have to *really* embarrass yourself. I'm sorry about this, but it's just the way it is."

"Yeah," Tojo muttered, frowning. "Sure you are."

"Ritual!" Simba exclaimed, once King Hapana had walked away to 'confer' with his lionesses. "This keeps getting better and better!"

"Simba, it sounds like the guy's about to sacrifice us to the Devil," Nala said, feeling even *more* suspicious about King Hapana now. "How can you think that this is 'better'?"

Simba shrugged. "If there's more food, then I'm happy." He let out a loud burp, and rubbed his huge stomach with a paw. "I think there's a little room for some more food in this stomach of mine."

"Simba, with a stomach like that you could fit *me* inside," she told him. "Keep eating and you'd be able to swallow the whole pride."

"I'll save them for dessert," he joked. "I wouldn't worry about him, though, Nala. He's just trying to be friendly. He probably just feels lonely, that's all."

"Lonely? Simba, he's surrounded by, like, ten lionesses," Nala argued. "Would *you* feel lonely if you were surrounded by ten lionesses?"

Simba shrugged. "... guess not."

"Exactly. There's something really weird about this King Hapana guy, and we're going to find out what it is."

"Can we get some food to go first?"

AN: Simba's putting on some weight, huh? King Hapana is overfeeding him too much. But why is he acting so weird? What's the 'ritual'? Find your answers tomorrow.

Chapter 7: Chapter 7: The Ritual

AN: A long chapter for you. The last chapter's *always* long. Enjoy it.

Chapter Seven: The Ritual

Simba stumbled after Nala as she headed towards the den, having trouble walking thanks to all of the food he'd eaten. He felt so heavy. *Maybe I shouldn't have eaten so much after all*, he thought, before shaking his head a moment later. *Nah. It was totally worth it. Maybe if I'm lucky then I'll get more...*

"You think you could slow down a bit, Nala?" he asked, struggling to keep up with her. Since she'd hardly eaten anything, she had no trouble with walking. Unfortunately, the same couldn't be said for Simba... "I'm having a little trouble moving around back here."

"Then you shouldn't have eaten so much," she replied, not even slowing down a little bit. "I did warn you. But hey, keep walking and I'm sure you'll eventually get used to it. You can't stay fat *for ever*. I bet you regret it now, huh?"

"No," he replied, as a smile spread across his face. "I just can't help but want to eat *more* food! I can't wait until this ritual! I'll be eating until I explode!" he exclaimed. "I don't even know why you want to see what's so 'weird' about King Hapana. Do you feel like this about *every* person you meet, Nala?"

"No. I just know when something's up," she responded. "Come on, Simba, you're smart enough to know that something's wrong here. Why would a guy who knows hardly anything about us want to treat us like we're gods or something? It just doesn't seem right."

Simba shrugged. "He said he'd hardly had any time to spend with his family. This is just his way of... making it up to us," he explained, although he didn't really believe it. He just wanted an excuse so they could enjoy the pleasures of the Hope Lands even more. "Have you stopped being so suspicious now?"

"No," Nala replied. "I just want to take one little look at what King Hapana is doing, and then we can go back to having fun. Okay?"

"Oh, all right, then," he said. "What do you even expect him to be doing? Planning to make us his kids or something? And how are we going to watch him without us even noticing? You haven't really thought this through, have you?"

"Simba, we're the *masters* at spying on people," she said. "I can't believe I even have to say that to you. I think all of that food is stopping your brain from working properly. Trust me, it'll be easy to watch him. It'll be like we're not even there."

"Fine. But I'm still not sure about this," Simba said, joining Nala by her side. "There's still time to change your mind," he said with a cheesy grin.

Hopping over a low bush, Nala stood at the side of the opening to the den, peering inside. Simba tripped over the bush, landing flat on his face with a *thump!* "So much for the top spies," Nala remarked, rolling her eyes. "Can't you keep quiet for just a minute?"

"Hey, it's not my fault that the food is so good," Simba replied, slowly getting to his paws and peering inside the den. "So what's he up to?"

"That's what I'm trying to find out," Nala replied, looking into the den.

King Hapana was talking to the other lionesses of the pride inside. "Okay, so the plan is all set," he told them, a grin on his face. "We'll lead them right into the Dark Cave of Doom."

"Ooh..." One of the lionesses shuddered. "I *love* the Dark Cave of Doom! It's so... *doom-y!*"

"That's not a word," King Hapana told her. "But yes, the Dark Cave of Doom does have a certain... appeal to it."

"What kind of appeal?" another lioness asked. "Evil? Scary? Horrifying?"

"Oh, take your pick," he replied, waving her off with a paw. "Anyway, once we get to the Dark Cave of Doom, the 'ritual' begins..." He chuckled sinisterly, and the lionesses chuckled along with him.

"Is he ready?" a lioness asked.

"Yes, he's ready," King Hapana replied, a menacing glint in his eyes. "More or less. He's had so much food that he can barely even walk! He'll be perfect for the little... plan we have in store for him."

"But we've never done anything like this to a cub before," another lioness said. "What if it all goes horribly wrong, and we'll end up never doing anything like it again?"

"Ah, don't worry about it," King Hapana replied. "It'll all go smoothly. You have the utmost faith in your King, don't you?"

"Yep."

"I don't believe it!" Nala exclaimed, her eyes wide with horror. "I can't believe what he's going to try to do to us! Well, what he's going to try to do to *you*."

"I'm confused," said Simba, scratching his head. "What exactly *is* he going to try and do to me?"

"Don't you get it, Simba? He wants to *eat* you!" Nala shouted.

"What? Don't be ridiculous, Nala. Why would he want to eat me? I didn't *hear* anything about him eating me," said Simba. "All I heard was something about the 'Dark Cave of Doom'."

"Simba, they asked if you were 'ready', and then King Hapana said that you'd eaten so much that you could hardly walk! Which you *have*, you know! He's been feeding you all of that food to fatten you up, Simba! He's going to feed you to his whole pride!"

Simba gulped nervously. "Do you... Do you really think so?"

Nala nodded, a sad look on her face. "Yep. You're going to become tonight's dinner, all right."

Simba's eyes widened as he started to panic. "What are we gonna do?" he cried. "We've gotta do *something*, Nala!" He grabbed hold of her and started shaking her frantically. "*Tell me what to do!*"

"Simba!" Nala cried. "You've got to stay quiet, otherwise King Hapana's gonna hear—"

"What do you think *you're* doing here?" King Hapana shouted, grabbing Simba by the throat. "Snooping around, were we?"

"Hey!" Simba shouted, struggling to break free. "Let me go!"

"I don't think so," he replied, a cruel smile forming on his face. "I've got very interesting plans for you, Simba. Very interesting indeed."

"Let him go, you creep!" Nala demanded, staring at King Hapana defiantly.

King Hapana laughed loudly in response. "I don't think so, Nala. You see, I've been planning this for such a long time. Such a very... *long* time, and I'm not going to give in so easily."

"Is there some kind of problem, my King?" a lioness said, walking out of the den and joining King Hapana by his side.

"Yes, it's this Nala person," he replied, pointing at Nala. "Kill her immediately. She's seen far too much."

"Nala... run!" Simba shouted.

Nala gasped as the lioness pounced at her. She turned around and started running as fast as she could. *I've gotta get out of here*, she thought as she ran. *After I've saved Simba from being eaten alive, of course.*

"Should I follow her?" the lioness asked.

"Just forget about it," King Hapana replied. "She can't do anything right now. And besides..." He held Simba up to his face. "It's nearly night. It's about time we started the... ritual."

"Tojo, go and stand in front of the wildebeest," Tama instructed. "Then just do your thing. And remember – speak in a girly voice."

"Tama, why do I have to speak like that?" Tojo asked as he made his way over to the wildebeest. "What makes a girly voice so different from my normal voice?"

"Hmm..." Tama thought for a moment, and then giggled when she realised something. "There *isn't* a difference! You already have a very high-pitched, squeaky voice! You sound like a girl anyway!"

"Very funny," Tojo grumbled. "Do you want me to do this or what?"

"Yes, yes, just do it," Tama replied, waiting for him to begin. "This is it," she said to herself. "My first ever hunt. I can't wait to dig my claws into that thick body..."

"Oh, this is so stupid..." Tojo stood a few feet in front of the wildebeest, and began to speak in a girly voice. "Why, hello there, you cute little wildebeest. I bet you'd just love to start chasing me all around the place, wouldn't you? Yes, you would! Yes, you would!"

The wildebeest looked up at Tojo, and immediately started charging towards him. Alarmed, Tojo turned around and started sprinting away from it. "Tama! You didn't tell me that they ran *this* fast!"

"Ah, don't worry about it!" Tama said as she started chasing the wildebeest, her claws extended. "It won't be around much longer once I've finished with it!"

"Well, hurry up!" he urged her. "Otherwise I won't be around for much longer!"

"Oh, no! Oh, no! Oh, no!" Nala cried as she paced back and forth beside the river. "Simba's been kidnapped! What am I gonna do? What am I gonna do?"

She slapped herself on the face. "Now, come on, Nala, you're not just gonna panic like an ordinary cub would. You're better than that," she told herself. "All you have to do is rescue Simba. And you need to stop talking to yourself, because you look completely insane."

Nala looked around. "No one's decided to follow me, so that means they think I've probably ran away. And it means that I'm the one with the advantage!" She looked down at the river. "King Hapana said that the current in the river was strong enough to carry you all the way back to the jungle, which isn't too far from the Pride Lands." A grin formed on her face. "So all I have to do is find the Dark Cave of Doom, rescue Simba, and then we both have to escape into the river, and we'll be back home. It couldn't be simpler!"

Nala turned around and started walking away from the river, knowing that she had to find the Dark Cave of Doom quickly. She didn't think that King Hapana took his time with his food...

"I don't believe this!" Simba exclaimed, struggling against the vines that held him to the large rock inside the cave. "I thought you were a nice guy!"

"Oh, but I am, Simba," said King Hapana, staring down at the cub. "It's just that... I have needs. Certain needs. Certain needs that only you can fulfil."

Simba was surrounded by King Hapana and his lionesses. They had formed a complete circle around him, and he noticed that they all looked hungry...

"Yeah, I know," Simba said, rolling his eyes. "You want to eat me. I get it. I've been through a lot of situations like this before. Don't think you're the first person who's tried to kill me. Or eat me, for that matter. And that was someone I made up!"

King Hapana chuckled in response. "No, no, no, Simba," he said, shaking his head. "I'm afraid you've got this all wrong. I don't want to *eat* you. That's just... disgusting! What I have planned for you is far less... barbaric."

"Then why have you fed me all that food?" Simba asked, curious. "I thought you were feeding me so much to fatten me up."

"Well, we *were*," King Hapana told him. "But not for the purpose of *eating* you. This was just to make sure that you couldn't escape. You're too fat to walk right now. There's no way you'd be able to get out."

"So what's the *real* reason you brought me and Nala here?" he asked. "It wasn't just to be the 'ultimate relative', was it?"

"Unfortunately not, Simba. I gave up on being social a long time ago. Partly because of what I'm about to do to you now."

Simba raised an eyebrow. "What *are* you going to do to me now?"

"You see, Simba, I have a very... educational mind. A scientific mind, if you will. Which makes me very intelligent. How do you think I managed to make Nala so sleepy yesterday? That was a special herb I'd concocted. A herb that just makes you want to sleep and sleep for a certain amount of time. And as soon as I had both of you right where I wanted, I took you from the Pride Lands. It's pretty easy to get back and forth, thanks to the strong current of the river."

"Okay, okay, so what are you going to do to me?"

"You're such a... special cub, Simba. I couldn't resist bringing you here. I just *had* to. I need to know how you work," King Hapana revealed.

Simba's eyes widened. "Huh? What is that supposed to mean?"

"It means that I need to learn about you," he explained. "I need to experiment on you. Run all kinds of tests. I need to know what makes you tick. I need to know what your weaknesses are. Heck, I even need to know how ticklish you are! And then when all the tests are done, I'll move on to the... gory side of things. I'll need to get inside you. Open you up."

Simba gasped. "But... But you can't do that!" he sputtered.

"I *have* to Simba," King Hapana said. "I just can't stop myself. I want to know everything about you, outside and inside. Quite literally."

"I... I won't let you!"

"I'm afraid you have no choice, Simba. You have no say in the matter. It won't be too bad. Just suffer through the pain so I can do my work."

"No! You won't get away with this!" Simba shouted, trying to get up. The vines that were wrapped around him held him tightly to the rock, rendering him unable to escape. He couldn't do anything.

"Just relax, Simba. It'll only take a few hours," King Hapana said, unsheathing his claws. "I have to know what makes you so special. I have to know."

"And this is your ritual?" Simba exclaimed, his eyes wide. "Is this what you do to everyone who comes here?"

"It's been our tradition," a lioness said. "For years and years."

"Of course, your father got wind of it eventually," said King Hapana. "But when he arrived I managed to convince him that nothing was going on. He wouldn't find the bodies, anyway. There's nothing left of them."

Simba continued to struggle and writhe, but it was no use. This was it. This was the end.

"I'm sorry, Simba." King Hapana held up a paw and extended his sharp claws. "I really am."

Whack! A rock struck King Hapana right in the back of the neck. A goofy smile spread across his face and he collapsed to the ground, unconscious.

"Not sorry enough!" a voice shouted from the cave opening.

Simba and all the lionesses turned to see Nala standing in the entrance to the cave, an angry look on her face.

"She knocked out the King," a lioness said, shocked.

"No one's ever knocked out the King before!" another exclaimed.

"She must be some kind of god!"

The lionesses started bowing as Nala walked over to Simba. "All hail Nala! All hail Nala!" they chanted.

"Just what the heck is going on?" Nala asked Simba, a confused look on her face.

"Trust me, you don't want to know," he replied, as Nala slashed through the vines with her claws, releasing him.

Simba rolled off the rock and to his paws. "Thanks for saving me," he told her, giving her a kiss on the cheek.

"No problem," she said, smiling. "Do you think you can walk properly, or do I have to carry you?"

"I think I can manage," Simba replied, before stumbling forward as the two cubs left the cave together.

The lionesses bowed in respect for Nala as they left. "She's the most amazing cub I've ever met..." one of them muttered.

King Hapana groaned as he regained consciousness, slowly getting up. "What happened...?" He looked up at his lionesses. "Girls! What happened to Simba? Where is he?"

The lionesses glared at him angrily. "He said we could trust him," one said furiously.

"He said he'd never failed before," another said.

"Looks like we were wrong."

"Hey, here's an idea: why don't we open *him* up?"

"Yes. Let's see what makes him such a failure."

The lionesses started advancing towards him slowly, their eyes glinting with menace.

"No." King Hapana chuckled nervously, backing away from them. "You don't want to cut me open, girls! I'm just skin and bones and... Oh, no. Please. No! No! *No!*"

"I'm sorry, Tojo," Tama told him, as he lay on the ground, covered in cuts and bruises.

They were back in the Outlands. Tama's hunting plan hadn't gone quite as well as she had expected it to. It hadn't gone really well at all, actually.

"Yeah. Sure you are," Tojo grumbled, a miserable look on his face. "I almost got trampled to death!"

"I saved you, though," Tama reminded him. "Remember that."

"Yeah, but you didn't get any food, and now we're going to starve. So much for your 'hunting powers'."

"Things will get better, Tojo," Tama assured him. "I promise."

"All right, then, Tama. How are things going to get better?" Tojo asked. "What is possibly going to make my life less miserable?"

Tama grabbed Tojo and kissed him right on the muzzle, before letting him go a second later. He just stared straight ahead for a few moments, before his eyes rolled into the back of his head and he fainted, falling to the ground.

Tama frowned. "I'm not *that* bad, am I?"

It took Nala all of her strength to pull Simba out of the river. They had spent more than an hour floating down it just to get back to the jungle. "Jeez, Simba, you could have done a little bit of swimming so you could lose some weight."

"I'm tired," Simba complained, collapsing onto the ground beside the river. "I can barely move, Nala. Why is it that something always wants to stop me moving around? First the Kulaani illness, and now this! Will it ever end?"

Nala looked up at the night sky, and sighed. "It's pretty late now. Come on – we need to get home."

Simba sounded exhausted at the mere thought of walking all the way back home in his condition. "Oh, no," he replied, shaking his head. "No more walking. No more..." He closed his eyes, exhausted.

"Simba?" Nala said, walking over to him. "Simba! You still awake?"

"Sleepy, sleepy, sleepy..." Simba muttered, fast asleep.

Nala frowned. "Mom's gonna kill me."

The End

AN: Tama kissed Tojo? Ooh, dear. This is going to have serious repercussions, isn't it?

NEXT TIME: Simba, Tojo and Tama wake up to find they are the only people left in the Pride Lands. Just what has

happened?